HONG KONG AND NEW ZEALAND LEARNING ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
(Literature Study and Inspiration for Learning Assessment of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia)

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Abstract

The learning assessment process is still an interesting discussion theme, especially with the presence of the term AfL (Assessment for Learning) which is a development of the AoL (Assessment of Learning) concept. The purpose of this article is to describe the implementation of AfL in two different regions, Hong Kong and New Zealand with the indication that there are several studies showing that AfL is running well in these two regions. The results of the description are then linked to the context of the assessment of Islamic Religious Education learning in Indonesia today. This research is a literature study with a qualitative model that begins with the search for sources (heuristics), assessment (criticism) and construction. As a result, Hong Kong presents an assessment system in the form of BCA (Basic Competency Assessment) and SBA (School-Based Assessment); while New Zealand implemented several policies to strengthen the implementation of this AfL. When referring to the implementation of AfL in the two regions, Indonesian Islamic Education requires teachers who are prepared and competent in carrying out the assessment. The Islamic Religious Education assessment system is very detailed and clear, but teachers are still not able to apply it.

Keywords: *Assessment for Learning (Afl), learning assessment, Islamic Religious Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Student assessment is still an interesting topic of discussion among researchers and teachers for the past decade. This is not surprising, because the assessment itself is an integral part and plays a vital role in the learning process. In other words, learning and assessment are two things related to each other; the learning process becomes the starting point for what

competencies students need to master and continuously becomes the basis for how teachers conduct their assessments; while the results of subsequent assessments will be a provision for teachers to design the next ideal learning. Therefore, if the learning process can develop from time to time due to the demands of the times, the assessment process also follows its development.

Pereira et al (2016) also revealed that the assessment process will continue to develop from time to time in accordance with the development of competency needs. In addition, Tilson et al (2011) revealed that there is no single form of assessment method that can cover the overall competence of students as a whole and intact. Thus, one assessment method needs to synergize with other methods to be able to capture student abilities as a whole. Likewise, the demands of the times continue to change and develop, such as the era of technological developments which in the end also resulted in the form of assessment having to develop and change; political policies are also very influential as is the case in Korea; and socio-cultural conditions. Therefore, it is also an interesting thing to do a critical study of the implementation of the assessment in one or several areas to be an inspiration for the implementation of the assessment in a certain area.

The relationship between assessment and learning has also given rise to an interesting discourse. The birth of the terms *assessment of learning*, *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* is the result of the dialectical-dialogical relationship that occurs simultaneously between assessment and learning. In its development, *assessment of learning* has indeed begun to be abandoned and switched to an *assessment for learning* pattern. However, this does not mean that assessment of learning is completely useless or ineffective; Lee (2007) revealed that both assessment of learning (AoL) or assessment for learning (AfL) both have their own assessment goals. The assessment may simply be up to AoL and no longer require AfL. AoL can even have a very urgent role in learning writing skills.

AfL is indeed an increasingly recognized assessment in recent times. AfL has started to be implemented in curriculum policies in various countries such as England, Wales and the

United States, as well as Hong Kong, New Zealand, Norway and Portugal, Sweden, and countries in the Asia-Pacific region also showed interest in this AfL. Even in New Zealand, the learning and assessment process has reflected the trend of *assessment as learning* (AaL) although some things still need improvement.

This research is a critical study of the implementation of AfL in two different regions, Hong Kong and New Zealand. The aim is to describe the AfL assessment process in these two regions in order to be an inspiration for the assessment system in Indonesia, especially the assessment of Islamic Religious Education. AfL is growing rapidly in both Hong Kong, and New Zealand. This is a simple indication that AfL is operating effectively in these two regions. In addition, AfL more or less intersects with formative assessment even though the two are not synonyms and there are several things that distinguish the two, but in the context of assessment of Islamic Religious Education there is still not much research on the application of AfL/formative assessment. This is what this article is based on.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a literature study that uses a descriptive-qualitative approach. The research stages include source search (*heuristics*), assessment (*criticism*), and construction. These stages in detail include selecting topics, developing themes, selecting and focusing on problems, searching for databases, selecting relevant data, and evaluating data based on their suitability for the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hongkong

The portrait of the learning assessment in Hong Kong cannot be separated from the accompanying political conditions, starting from pre-colonial Hong Kong, Hong Kong as a British colony, to today's Hong Kong. In fact, AfL in Hong Kong has a long history of being successfully implemented. Berry (2011) explains in his article on this subject; started by a

condition of China itself which is culturally a test-oriented country. During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) for example, the government provided limited opportunities for education to carry out assessments. The purpose of assessment at that time was only to lead a person from a certain stage to a certain higher stage. This is usually related to a promotion or personal interest in the form of fame. That is, the results of the assessment can be used by someone to follow his career path.

However, the education system that is too exam-oriented has drawn a lot of criticism. Berry (2011) in another article explains that this kind of assessment carries a high risk, because the assessment ultimately becomes the key to social mobility towards access to higher education or higher career paths. The assessment system is ultimately the only door for someone to become better in career or education. As a result, many schools whose activities are only aimed at preparing students to pass one exam to the next. Learning content is not about developing students' talents or skills, but only materials related to exam materials.

Such a system is a very stressful scoring system. Yan & Chow (2002) describe in their research that assessment in Hong Kong is highly selective and most of the selection is carried out by formal and external education with a uniform curriculum. Schools in Hong Kong have an 'obsessive concern' with testing. When a child drops out of the high school level, at the very least, he or she will go through a total of eight major selection exams; each of these exams is a determinant of whether he will continue his schooling to the next level or not. Thus, this grading system also determines the reputation of the teacher. The success of the teacher lies in his success in delivering students through each of the assessment hurdles, and the result is that the entire curriculum, teaching methods, and student learning methods themselves are all focused on the goal of passing each of these assessments.

However, the assessment system in Hong Kong certainly doesn't stop there. Hong Kong continues to improve and make efforts to improve this assessment-oriented education system. Brown et all (2009) reveal about the shift in the views of Hong Kong people who are

starting to realize that learning assessment is not only a technical matter but must reflect social aspirations, perseverance, and hard work; Assessment is not only about exams and tests, but is part of the learning process that can provide feedback to students and help students themselves to improve their learning.

As a result, Hong Kong began to adopt a student-centred approach and introduced a *Target-Oriented Curriculum* (TOC) as a form of curriculum integration. This TOC is certainly not smooth in its implementation as Yeung (2009) reveals that the TOC is difficult to put into practice and the student-centered approach is just rhetoric and has not been fully implemented in Hong Kong yet. In fact, this TOC promotes progressivity in student learning; Morris (2002) revealed that TOC wanted to change the paradigm that initially focused on certain goals to focus on student skills such as problem solving, reasoning, inquiry, communication, and building a concept; changing a teacher-centered approach to one that emphasizes student activity, interaction, task-based learning and caters to individual differences; and changing the dependence on these tests into a form of assessment that identifies progressive targets, and provides feedback for learning.

In 2000, the Hong Kong government initiated a reform of assessment by placing AfL on the reform agenda. The Hong Kong government's emphasis on AfL has spawned two initiatives, the first is the *Basic Competency Assessment* (BCA) for primary and junior secondary school education, and the second is the *School-Based Assessment* (SBA) for secondary education. BCA, according to Tan (2019) uses Bernstein's pedagogic performance and competence model. The performance model refers to what is missing or lacking in the learning output where the results of this assessment can explain what students lack with follow-up implementation of remedial; while the competence model highlights what students have mastered with the follow-up implementation of enrichment.

Tan (2019) further explained that BCA is the main assessment mechanism that encourages and promotes AfL principles. BCA strives for teachers and parents to help students by paying attention to students' learning needs and problems. BCA consists of three

components, including the *Student Assessment Repository* (STAR), *Web-based Learning and Teaching Support* (WLTS) and *Territory-wide System Assessment* (TSA). STAR is an online assessment system to measure the performance of participating students and disseminate the results of the assessment through reports to schools, and the results will guide teachers to plan the next possible learning; WLTS is almost the same as STAR which is an online platform but concentrates more on providing useful learning activities and materials for teachers; and TSA is an assessment of students' basic competencies in three school subjects, namely Chinese, English and Mathematics.

On the other hand, the SBA assessment is an assessment carried out in schools by teachers and accounts for 15-25% of students' graduation considerations at the end of each level of education. Thus, the teacher has the authority to determine whether students develop or not during the learning process, what difficulties students face for certain subjects, or what talents students have. In other words, SBA is a formative assessment for students. Carless (2010) revealed that the SBA's motivations include; the potential for assessing a wider range of accomplishments than through a single exam; involve teachers and students more actively in the exam process; facilitate the improvement and development of students from time to time; and does not determine students' academic standards with a single exam. The SBA provides a richer reference for portraits of student abilities.

The combination of BCA and SBA is an attempt to combine assessment of learning and assessment for learning. Learning assessment which is usually interpreted as a summative assessment is complemented by an assessment for learning which is interpreted as a formative assessment. The aim is to create a complete and comprehensive assessment for the development and achievement of student competencies. This is in accordance with the conclusion that Cheng et al (2011) stated that Hong Kong is at the right time to combine *assessment of learning* and *assessment for learning*. Berry (2011) states that assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle; assessment can capture student learning

outcomes (summative) as well as encourage and support formative assessment as a basis for designing better learning.

The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) realized this combination of formative and summative assessment well. Hong Kong through the CDC has launched a framework for assessment practices in schools as illustrated below;
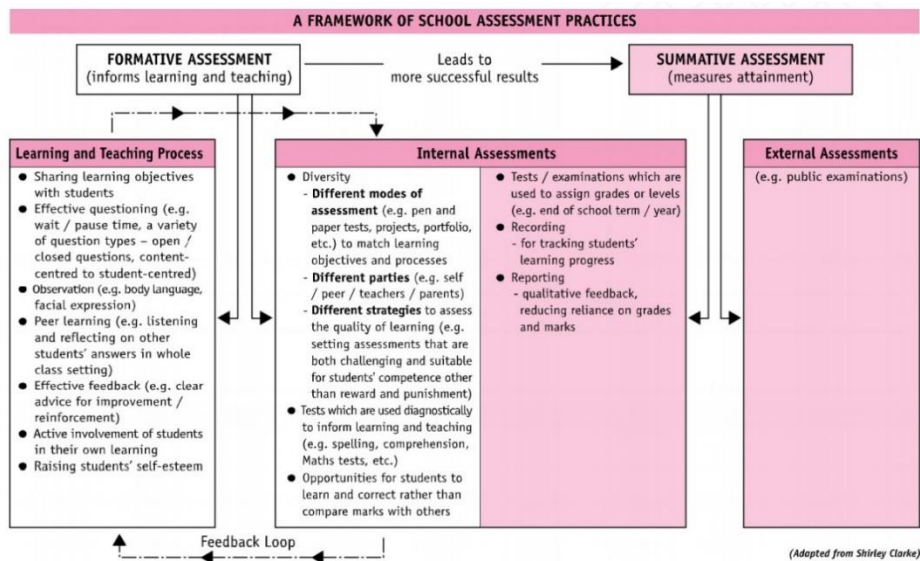

Chart 1. Illustration of a combination of formative and summative assessment

Thus, assessment in Hong Kong has been considered an integral part of the learning process. Internal assessment provides a feedback loop to strengthen the next learning process. The interesting thing about the illustration is that there are three types of assessment forms, 1) assessment in different ways (written tests, projects, portfolios, etc.); 2) assessment with different actors (self-assessment, peers, teachers or parents); and 3) assessment with different strategies.

This practice of learning assessment in Hong Kong at a glance illustrates something ideal. That is, the discussion of student assessment cannot be separated from the learning process itself. The two are not two things that can be studied separately but are

interconnected. Discussions about assessment of course also automatically discuss learning. However, this ideal condition is not without challenges and obstacles, as Berry (2011) reveals that Hong Kong is still experiencing some difficulties in implementing this AfL, and according to him Hong Kong is still struggling to prove that the AfL concept can produce results.

New Zealand

Similar to Hong Kong, the portrait of the assessment in New Zealand also cannot be separated from the prevailing political policy conditions. Birenbaum et al (2015) reveal that the policies of the education system in New Zealand can change almost overnight, from one of the most internationally democratic systems to one of the most decentralized. As a result, as stated by Philips (2000) that schools and teachers can develop their own assessment methods to assess student progress and achievement against a predetermined curriculum. On the other hand, the Minister of Education in New Zealand also ensures the progress of students through monitoring activities, providing examples related to assessment activities included in the curriculum, assisting in the procurement of assessment materials, and conducting some kind of professional development activities for teachers. Thus, schools in this country are self-governing or independent schools.

The interesting thing about New Zealand is that when other countries were introducing national exams in the 1990s, New Zealand actually rejected it. This year the country emphasized its assessment system on formative objectives by relying on assessment models developed by schools or teachers themselves. In addition, Irving et al (2011) revealed in their research that education policy in New Zealand adopted the concept of AfL. The main purpose of the assessment is to improve student learning and improve teaching by teachers, meaning that the assessment provides dual feedback both to students so that they learn better and to teachers so that the teaching methods they apply are of higher quality.

Thus, New Zealand focuses on an assessment system that emphasizes the improvement or development of student learning and not on achievement, formative and not

summative. This is in line with what was conveyed by Crooks (2011) that New Zealand is indeed consistent with the objectives of this assessment; most assessments in New Zealand primary schools focus on enhancing student development. As a result, what often happens is that teachers do unstructured interactions with students, pay attention to their interactions with students, pay attention to student interactions with other students as a form of assessment through observation. Teachers in New Zealand place more emphasis on this than carrying out a formal, planned assessment program.

The implementation of the assessment in New Zealand, especially at the elementary level, is only in the form of an assessment on a scale of 1 – 5. Crooks (2002) explains that if students are able to achieve competence well, the range of scores given to them is 1, if it is low, it will move towards a scale of 5. In certain conditions, teachers have little information about student development outside the classroom, while the demands for giving grades on this scale are high demands in learning. Therefore, teachers usually work closely with parents; each student has a note card which will be reported to parents with written comments. Although in some ways this form of assessment has drawn criticism, New Zealand continues to apply it (especially for basic education) and remains focused on monitoring student learning, improving learning through direct feedback to students.

There have been several developments regarding the learning assessment system in New Zealand. The goal, of course, is to improve the existing learning assessment system. In the 1990s for example, the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) was established with the aim of increasing the coherence of the qualifications system so that there are varied pathways for students to capture their knowledge and skills. In 2008, the NZQA initiated a *Targeted Review of Qualifications at Levels 1–6* with the aim of assessments in New Zealand being truly useful and relevant to students, employers and other stakeholders. This NZQA eventually resulted in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) which gave birth to three elements of qualification; 1) Graduate profile, which identifies the expected learning outcomes of a qualification. This idea is built to ascertain what students will know during the

learning process and what students will achieve through that knowledge; 2) Educational path to ensure that students will continue their further studies; and 3) Work path or contribution to society, which identifies what fields students will enter in the future after completing the study period.

In addition to NZQA with NZQD, New Zealand also made changes to the assessment system in the early 2000s called the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). This NCEA is a standards-based system that measures student performance in accordance with predetermined achievements or competencies. The NCEA system is actually very similar to university studies in the first year where the level of performance will only refer to the decision to pass or not pass.

However, the most interesting thing about the assessment system in New Zealand besides the previous description is the *National Education Monitoring Project* (NEMP). The NEMP is a very detailed form of national assessment to measure the knowledge, skills and attitudes of primary and secondary school students at two levels, namely grade 4 (ages 8-9) and grade 8 (ages 12-13). There are four different approaches in this NEMP, and students will spend approximately one hour in each approach. The aim is to capture student competence as a whole; 1) One-on-one interviews. Each student works individually with the teacher, tries 15-20 assignments and overall student activity will be recorded; 2) Team. Four students worked collaboratively, supervised by the teacher and recorded; 3) Station or post. Four students work independently, moving around assigned posts; and 4) Independent. Four students work individually to complete artwork, demonstration, or visual skills tasks.

These approaches have interesting rationalizations. The teacher will be able to photograph students' knowledge, how students apply their knowledge, how students solve problems, work in a team, their abilities as individuals/personal, and so on. Based on this, it is not surprising that Hume & Coll (2009) stated that New Zealand has implemented *assessment as learning*; it is no longer about assessment to measure students' abilities (*assessment of*

learning) or about assessment to improve learning (*assessment for learning*), but *assessment as learning* where students can learn a lot in it.

Hong Kong and New Zealand for Islamic Religious Education Learning Assessment

There are many things that can be inspired after examining the learning assessment system in these two different regions, in Hong Kong and New Zealand. Assessment systems such as the BCA (Basic Competency Assessment) in Hong Kong for example, which uses a performance and competency model; the performance model refers to what students do not master while the competency model refers to the opposite, namely what students have mastered. The follow-up of the two models ultimately leads to an emphasis on remedial for performance and enrichment for competence.

But on the other hand, the assessment of Islamic Religious Education learning is still experiencing problems such as teacher complaints about the authentic assessment system in the 2013 Curriculum providing many tasks such as the preparation of too many questions or too complex an assessment format, moreover the teacher does not understand how the technical assessment is. Roughly speaking, how to move to the stage of the process of assessing enrichment or remedial while the teacher is not yet competent to carry out basic assessments which of course also allows for errors to occur in determining whether a student should be given enrichment or remedial.

When compared with New Zealand, of course the condition of Islamic Religious Education teachers is still far behind. Teachers in New Zealand have been trusted to develop their own assessment methods, even the schools there are self-governing or independent schools. Meanwhile, Islamic Religious Education teachers who have provided detailed instructions on how to assess the aspects that are expected in the curriculum are still experiencing such obstacles. This certainly illustrates that the actual problem of assessment in Islamic Religious Education does not lie in the system, but in its human resources, namely the readiness of teachers.

The most interesting thing from this literature study, especially to be an inspiration for Islamic Religious Education, is that it comes from New Zealand. The country established the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) which produces the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) with three qualification elements, one of which is a work path or contribution to society, which identifies what areas students will enter in the future after graduation. The question is, what fields or work paths can be taken if students are competent in learning Islamic Religious Education [?]. The most realistic thing is to become a religious leader or something related to it. This question is not to discredit Islamic Religious Education lessons, but policy makers need to explore further about what students can do with the knowledge and skills of Islamic Religious Education within themselves, what contribution will students make to society with that provision, in what kind of jobs will students enter with these provisions? Countries that are referred to as inspiration for either education or assessment are countries whose orientation is to equip students with a set of skills to get a job in the future (the future job) or for the benefit of their national economy, and this will seem useless because the orientation of Islamic religious education does not lead in that direction.

Thus, the task of Islamic Religious Education is indeed heavy. Islamic religious education is oriented to character building, and how to measure character development validly is certainly a job that should not only be the school that is the only party in initiating and being responsible for it. This is a shared task.

CONCLUSION

Hong Kong applies AfL (assessment for learning) through BCA (Basic Competency Assessment) and SBA (School-Based Assessment) and tries to combine the two as an embodiment of the relationship between assessment of learning and assessment for learning, between summative assessment and formative assessment. Meanwhile, New Zealand provides clarity in the application of AfL through its educational policies where the purpose

of the assessment is to improve student learning and improve teacher teaching, meaning that the assessment provides dual feedback both to students so that their learning gets better and to teachers so that the teaching methods they apply are more effective.

The inspiration for Islamic Religious Education is that the thing that needs to be improved so far is its human resources which in this case are teachers to actually be able to implement the assessment system in the 2013 curriculum. New Zealand has given authority to teachers to develop appropriate assessment methods, while Islamic Religious Education teachers are still struggling with a lack of understanding about the assessment method, which actually has clear guidelines.

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